opinion which they know would have a powerful effect in checking the evil. Such an opinion may be called "pious," but it would govern the policy of the Council, would act as a warning to offenders, and would indicate a determination to use every possible means to purge this College of all complicity with one of the greatest scandals of the day.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Nov. 29th, 1897.

W. G. DICKINSON.

"MORALS AND THE STAGE."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In an annotation with the above heading in THE LANCET of Oct. 2nd you say: "We should doubt ourselves whether crime was ever prompted by either a poster or a stage representation," and you also quote Sir Henry Irving as having asked at a complimentary dinner at Cardiff, "How many wives had owed a violent death to the pernicious example of Shakespeare in *Othello*?" While I agree with you as to posters, which produce a mere passing impression, and are therefore as highly coloured as possible with that object in view, I think that a stage representation is a very different thing and that in the case of tragedies the more powerful the play the more is the attention fixed and the more likely are the mental images to remain deeply impressed in the brain of the spectator.

Some years ago I had to do with a case of murder where the idea of strangulation was directly prompted by a theatrical representation of *Othello*. It was the case of a young Italian who insured the life of his servant to his own benefit and after waiting a couple of months smothered him in his bed one night. At his trial the criminal calmly remarked that he had lately seen (*twice* he actually went, probably with the object of perfecting his method) the opera of *Othello* and that he "only did to the young man what *Othello* did to Desdemona," and he also confessed that in the very act of smothering his victim "the scene in the theatre was vividly before him as it was before him now" ("*Tuve y tengo presente lo que hizo Otello con Desdemona*" is what he actually said in Spanish). There is no doubt that in this case the crime of strangulation was directly suggested to the would-be murderer by a stage representation of *Othello*. This is one case at any rate for Sir Henry Irving to ponder over. The whole case of this Italian was especially rich in medico-legal interest, but I must not encroach any more on your valuable space.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

GEORGE MACKERN, M.D. Lond.

Buenos Aires, Argentine, Nov. 4th.

"THE DISINFECTION OF CLOTHING BY HEAT."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have not the good fortune to be personally acquainted with Professor Delépine, but judging from the courteous wording of his letter I feel confident that he will acquit me of plagiarism when I assure him that until to-day I was absolutely ignorant that anything like my steam disinfecter had ever been in use before. I think that there is some excuse for this inasmuch as I have not noticed any mention of it in THE LANCET; nor in the appendix on Steam Disinfectors in Applied Bacteriology (edition 1897), by Pearmain and Moor; nor in the chapter on Disinfection in the Manual of Infectious Diseases (edition, June, 1896), by Goodall and Washbourn; nor in the Theory and Practice of Hygiene (edition 1896), by Notter and Frith. Mr. Bailey and myself had been working at the subject for several weeks, but the heating power was always the stumbling-block, and although the sight of painters with an "Etna" in hand scraping old paint off doors was familiar enough the idea of using volatilised petroleum never occurred to me until Mr. Bailey suggested it. Curiously enough, a week or two before I had begun to think about making a machine a notice under the head of "New Inventions" appeared in THE LANCET of May 29th, 1897, describing "a wickless oil stove with smokeless flame" (made by the same firm which makes the "intensive oil-furnace" shown in the illustration to my paper) and referring to the production of this flame as an "attainment of some importance." This notice escaped my attention probably because I had not at that time any use in view for such a stove. With regard to the

similarity in shape, dimensions, and the amount of water necessary which Professor Delépine points out, my opinion is that if he put the principle of heating by volatilised petroleum into the heads of ten men and told them to make a steam disinfecter nine of them would make one pretty much the same in shape and dimensions and would come to the same conclusion as to the amount of water necessary as Professor Delépine and myself. With regard to Mr. Walter Bernard's letter I have looked up THE LANCET of May 16th, 1896, and I find a short account of an apparatus for disinfection by exposure to fumes of heated eucalyptus and carbolic acid. There is no mention of volatilised petroleum or steam at boiling water temperature and without steam at 100° C. I feel convinced he will not get eucalyptus and carbolic acid fumes to penetrate through woollen fabrics in any reasonable time; if, on the other hand, he can get steam at that temperature throughout his disinfecting chamber he can then dispense with those agents altogether.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Nov. 27th, 1897.

A. F. MESSITER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Mr. Messiter has shown me Professor Delépine's letter to you and his own answer. I beg to confirm all that Mr. Messiter says and to say that the use of volatilised petroleum was suggested by myself alone without ever having seen or heard of any similar disinfection apparatus. The similarity in shape and dimensions may be accounted for by the fact that galvanised iron is sent out in sheets 6 ft. by 2 ft. 6 in. The height of the chamber without the lid is 2 ft. 6 in. and 6 ft. gives diameter of 21 inches after allowing for seams.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Epworth, Nov. 29th, 1897.

ALFRED BAILEY.

"THE MECHANISM OF DEATH FROM CHLOROFORM."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Nov. 13th Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane criticises my paper on the Mechanism of Death from Chloroform. It would have been fairer to me had he read my paper more carefully, giving the expressions used in it their proper value, and it would have been still better had he reserved his remarks until he could have referred to my previous paper and Dr. Snow's book from which Cases 6 and 7 are taken.

The reports of the cases coming at second-hand are not full, but the information afforded is enough for the immediate purpose and greater than Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane seems to appreciate. In describing Case 2 I advisedly employ the terms "breathing deeply" and "free respiration" expecting these words to be taken at their current value, as indicating that air was freely entering the chest and trusting your readers to credit me with a knowledge of the difference between "free" and "obstructed" respiration. Yet Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane does not know "whether air was entering the chest or not!" In Case 3, scanty as the information is, it is enough to emphasise the fact that there may be free respiration at a period when the circulation has practically ceased as shown by the absence of bleeding on incision. As regards Case 7 Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane says "the clinical picture is familiar enough. It is that of a man whose air-passage is obstructed, say, by the root of his tongue." Has Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane ever known a patient with his air-passage obstructed in this fashion take long, deep inspirations or die under the circumstances described?

In Case 1 I agree with Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane that similar symptoms could be produced by shock—that is practically the point to which I have already drawn attention. In this particular instance I consider the symptoms were caused by the chloroform and precipitated by the sudden raising of the head further depleting the nerve centres of blood. May I remind Surgeon-Lieutenant Lane that in the condition known as "shock" we have extreme lowering of the blood pressure. My contention is that an equal lowering of the blood pressure may also be produced by chloroform (indeed is produced) and the outward manifestations of the occurrence of this condition depend upon the degree of narcosis the patient is in at the time.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Manchester, Nov. 24th, 1897.

ALEXANDER WILSON.